

# TRANSLATING ENGLISH ADJECTIVAL CATENATIONS INTO SPANISH: EVIDENCE FROM THE P-ACTRES PARALLEL CORPUS<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The catenation of two or more adjectives is common in pre-modifying position in English to describe the same noun (Tucker 1998). In contrast, the internal structure of Spanish NPs favours the post-nominal position of all modifiers alike, adjectives, relative clauses or prepositional phrases (PPs), and different types of modifiers tend to combine in the same NP. This difference is a major problem when translating from English into Spanish.

## HYPOTHESIS

The semantic content of some of the English adjectives may be lost in the Spanish translations and the language-specific catenations used may involve different types of modifiers apart from adjectives.

## AIM

The aim of this study is to analyze a large number of Spanish translations of English adjectival catenations (3 adjectives in a row) to reveal the various combinatory possibilities employed and any trends in their frequency and uses.

## METHOD

Empirical data have been extracted from the English-Spanish Parallel corpus P-ACTRES:

- Current size: 2,453,453 words
- Date of texts: from 2000 on.
- Length of texts: from ± 20,000.
- Registers: books, press & miscellanea.
- Language variety: Peninsular Spanish.
- Sentence alignment & POS tagging.

	ENGLISH	SPANISH	TOTAL
<b>Books - fiction</b>	396,462	421,065	817,527
<b>Books- non-fiction</b>	494,358	553,067	1,047,425
<b>Newspapers</b>	115,502	137,202	252,704
<b>Magazines</b>	119,604	126,989	246,593
<b>Miscellanea</b>	40,178	49,026	89,204
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,166,104	1,287,349	<b>2,453,453</b>

Table 1. Number of words included in P-ACTRES.

Catenations of any 3 adjectives in a row were searched for in the English half of the corpus using the POS Tagging.

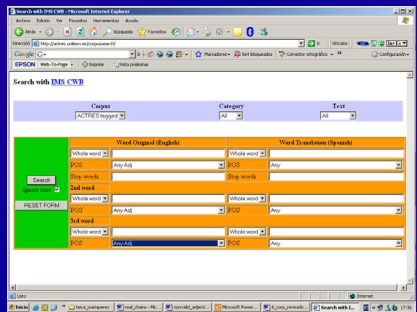


Figure 1. P-ACTRES interface. Free demo available at: <http://actres.unileon.es/>

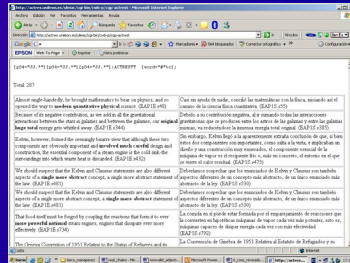


Figure 2. P-ACTRES outcome: adj + adj + adj.

Of the initial 287 cases, 146 were catenations involving quantifiers and another 25 were instances of only 2 adjectives in English, one of which was compound. Final sample: 116. In 12 cases there was transposition into NP or modulation, and in 104 cases there were catenations of modifiers in Spanish.

## RESULTS

- Partial omission in 25 cases, 21% of the total;
- 33 different combinations in Spanish;
- 46% of cases included a pre-modifying adjective in Spanish.

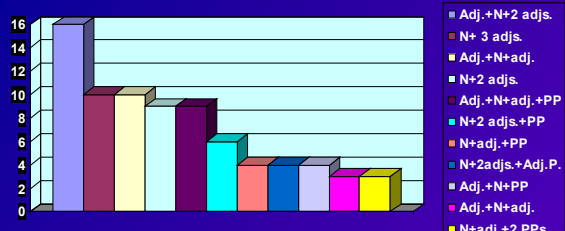


Figure 3. Spanish translations of English catenations occurring 3 times or more in P-ACTRES.

## Examples:

### Adjective + N + 2 adjectives

The British, and others, did not want it to be called what it really is: a <b>fledgling European diplomatic service</b> . (PATG21E.s40)	Los británicos, y otros, no están dispuestos a llamarlo lo que verdaderamente es: <b>un incipiente servicio diplomático europeo</b> . (PATG21S.s41)
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### N + 3 adjectives

This approach appeals to those who think that the French and Dutch referendums were a rejection of the <b>British liberal economic model</b> . (PNJS3E.s34)	Este enfoque atrae a quienes piensan que los referendos francés y holandés fueron un rechazo al <b>modelo económico liberal británico</b> . (PNJS3S.s35)
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### Partial omission: Adjective + N + adjective

He's wearing a <b>traditional white Arab gown</b> - known in Yemen as a <b>thawb</b> ; and a head wrap printed in red and white checks, here called a <b>mashadah</b> . (RWD1E.s22)	Viste el tradicional traje árabe, conocido en Yemen como <b>thawb</b> , y un tocado a cuadros rojos y blancos, que aquí llaman <b>mashadah</b> . (RWD1S.s21)
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## CONCLUSIONS

In over 20% of cases, one of the English modifiers is omitted in the Spanish translation. In nearly half the cases we find a pre-modifying adjective followed by the head and one or more other modifiers. Single adjectives combine more frequently than PPs or Adjective Phrases. In only 6% of cases is one of the elements a clause in Spanish (relative or participle clause).

## REFERENCES

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 Tucker, G.H. 1998. *The Lexicogrammar of Adjectives. A Systemic Functional Approach to Lexis*. London: Cassell.

<sup>1</sup> Research for this article has been undertaken as part of the ACTRES program, partly funded by the Ministry of Education and ERDF (HM2005-02125). The acronym stands for *Análisis contrastivo y traducción English-Spanish*, 'Contrastive analysis and translation English-Spanish'.